

Poems
by
J. O. Fields







POEMS

BY

JAMES T. FIELDS.



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WORDSWORTH.

THE grass hung wet on Rydal banks,
The golden day with pearls adorning,
When side by side with him we walked
To meet midway the summer morning.

The west wind took a softer breath,
The sun himself seemed brighter shining,
As through the porch the minstrel stepped,
His eye sweet Nature's look enshrining.

He passed along the dewy sward,
The blue-bird sang aloft, " Good morrow ! "
He plucked a bud, the flower awoke
And smiled without one pang of sorrow.

He spoke of all that graced the scene
In tones that fell like music round us ;
We felt the charm descend, nor strove
To break the rapturous spell that bound us.

We listened with mysterious awe,
Strange feelings mingling with our pleasure ;
We heard that day prophetic words, —
High thoughts the heart must always treasure.

Great Nature's Priest ! thy calm career
With that sweet morn on earth has ended ;
But who shall say thy mission died
When, winged for heaven, thy soul ascended ?

WRITTEN AFTER HEARING MRS. KEMBLE
READ "THE TEMPEST."

THOU great Enchantress, walking hand in hand
With Him of Avon nursed in Albion's isle, —
Whether we meet thee on the sea-beat sand,
Or gilding old Verona with thy smile, —
Welcome ! thou fit attendant on his fame,
Whose glorious thoughts reëcho still his name !

Illumed by thee, those deathless pages glow
With added lustre naught but Genius gives :

Thou speak'st ! thy melting tones their music throw

Along the lines, and lo ! swift Ariel lives,

And sings, and, darting, drinks the silent air,

Then, fading, floats away, — we wist not where !

Thou bidd'st us forth where'er his fancy reigns :

Through verdurous Arden now we watch thee roam, —

Anon, thou call'st us to the Roman plains,

As if those dusky haunts had been thy home.

Where'er thou wilt, thou lead'st us, wondering, on.

Bound to the magic of thy beckoning tone.

Thou great restorer of departed breath !

O, front to front with Him couldst thou but stand.

His spirit, wafted from the halls of Death

Back to its old domain, thy native land, —

How would our hearts with warmest rapture stir,

To hear that voice applaud his sweet Interpreter !

LAST WISHES OF A CHILD.

“ ALL the hedges are in bloom,
And the warm west wind is blowing :
Let me leave this stifled room,
Let me go where flowers are growing.

“ Look ! my cheek is thin and pale,
And my pulse is very low :
Ere my sight begins to fail
Take my hand, and let us go.

“ Was not that the robin’s song,
Piping through the casement wide?
I shall not be listening long :
Take me to the meadow-side.

“ Bear me to the willow brook ;
Let me hear the merry mill ;
On the orchard I must look
Ere my beating heart is still.

“ Faint and fainter grows my breath, —
Lead me quickly down the lane :
Mother dear ! this chill is *death*, —
I shall never speak again ! ”

Still the hedges are in bloom,
And the warm west wind is blowing ;
Still we sit in silent gloom, —
O'er his grave the grass is growing.

ON A PORTRAIT OF CROMWELL.

“PAINT me as I am,” said Cromwell,
Rough with age and gashed with wars ;
“ Show my visage as you find it, —
Less than truth my soul abhors.”

This was he whose mustering phalanx
Swept the foe at Marston Moor ;
This was he whose arm uplifted
From the dust the fainting poor.

God had made his face uncomely, —
“Paint me as I am,” he said ;
So he *lives* upon the canvas
Whom they chronicled as *dead* !

Simple justice he requested
At the artist's glowing hands,
“Simple justice ! ” from his ashes
Cries a voice that still commands.

And, behold ! the page of History,
Centuries dark with Cromwell's name,
Shines to-day with thrilling lustre
From the light of Cromwell's fame !

THE ALPINE CROSS.

BENIGHTED once where Alpine storms
Have buried hosts of martial forms,
Halting with fear, benumbed with cold,
While swift the avalanches rolled,
Shouted our guide, with quivering breath,
“ *The path is lost! — to move is death!* ”

The savage snow-cliffs seemed to frown,
The howling winds came fiercer down :

Shrouded in such a dismal scene,
No mortal aid whereon to lean,
Think you what music 't was to hear,
“ *I see the Cross! — our way is clear!* ”

We looked, and there, amid the snows, ,
A simple cross of wood uprose ;
Firm in the tempest's awful wrath
It stood, to guide the traveller's path,
And point to where the valley lies,
Serene beneath the summer skies.

One dear companion of that night
Has passed away from mortal sight ; —

He reached his home to droop and fade,
And sleep within his native glade ;
But as his fluttering hand I took,
Before he gave his farewell look,
He whispered from his bed of pain,
“ *The Alpine Cross I see again !* ”
Then, smiling, sank to endless rest
Upon his weeping mother's breast !

THE SONG QUEEN.

Look on her ! there she stands, the world's prime wonder,
The great Queen of Song ! Ye rapt musicians,
Touch your golden wires, for now ye prelude strains
To mortal ears unwonted. Hark ! she sings.
Yon pearly gates their magic waves unloose,
And all the liberal air rains melody
Around. O night, O time, delay, delay !
Pause here, entranced. Ye evening winds, come near,
But whisper not ; and you, ye flowers, fresh culled
From odorous nooks, where silvery rivulets run,
Breathe silent incense still.

Hail, matchless Queen !

Thou, like the high white Alps, canst hear, unspoiled,
The world's artillery (thundering praises) pass,
And keep serene and safe thy spotless fame !



THE LITTLE HAND.

OUR hut was near the ocean marge,
One summer many a year ago,
Where, all around, the huge rocks plunged
Their giant forms in deeps below.

At eve we saw the sun go down
The watery western skies afar,
And hailed with eager, childish joy
The light of every new-born star.

Along the beach, among the cliffs,
Our days in pastime seemed to glide,
As if the hours were made to mark
The ebb and flow of ocean's tide.

We said, "Till all our locks are gray,
Each year in June we 'll hither roam,
And pitch our tent; no other spot
Shall be our life-long summer home."

One morn we strolled along the shore,
To watch the waves come rolling in :
The night had been a night of fear,
Of thunder-crash and tempest din.

In glee we sang our ocean songs,
As on we moved across the sand.
“ What ’s that among the salt sea-weed ! ”
A little helpless human hand !

We put the cold, wet grass aside,
The gathering surf we brushed away,
And there, in pallid death’s embrace,
A shipwrecked child extended lay.

We took it from the murderous wave,
Looked once upon the storm-scared eyes,
Then scooped a grave where waters moan,
And oft the wailing sea-bird flies.

The charm had fled ; — the hut, the cliff,
The beach so often wandered o'er,
Were poisoned by a lifeless hand ; —
We went — and we returned no more !

RELICS.

You ask me why with such a jealous care
I hoard these rings, this chain of silken hair,
This cross of pearl, this simple key of gold,
And all these trifles which my hands enfold.
I 'll tell you, friend, why all these things become
My blest companions when remote from home ;
Why, when I sleep, these first secured I see,
With wakeful eye and guarded constancy.
Each little token, each familiar toy,
My mother gave her once too happy boy ;

Her kiss went with them ; — chide me, then, no more,
That thus I count my treasures o'er and o'er ; —
Alas ! she sleeps beneath the dust of years,
And these dear flowers I water with my tears !

A POOR MAN'S EPITAPH.

He was not what the world counts rich,
Houses and lands had none in store ;
But blessed with strength for honest toil,
He neither asked nor strove for more.

His neighbors moved in higher ranks,
And far above him all could shine ;
He lived with Health, and brave Content,
And water drank instead of wine.

“ Enough for me,” he said, “ if here
My table ’s spread when hunger calls,
To leave me something for a friend
Whose lot than mine still lower falls :

“ And if the rainy days should come,
And I ’ve no silver hoarded by,
How can I want, if Him I trust
Who feeds the ravens when they cry !

“ Around my board a place I ’ll keep
For pallid lips that pine in woe,
And better gifts than I impart
Shall unseen angel hands bestow ! ”

See where he sleeps who served mankind, —
Who wept and watched with weeping eyes !
Walk round his grave with reverent steps,
For there a more than hero lies.

G L O R Y.

UNCHANGING Power ! thy genius still presides
O'er vanquished fields and ocean's purpled tides,
Sits like a spectre at the soldier's board,
Adds Spartan steps to many a broken sword ;
For thee and thine combining squadrons form
To sweep the world with passion's awful storm ;
The intrepid warrior shouts thy deathless name,
And plucks new valor from thy torch of fame ;
For him the bell shall wake its loudest song,
For him the cannon's thunder echo long,

For him a nation weave the unfading crown,
And swell the triumph of his sweet renown.
So Nelson watched, long ere Trafalgar's days,
Thy radiant orb, prophetic Glory, blaze, —
Saw Victory wait, to weep his bleeding scars,
And plant his breast with Honor's burning stars.
So the young hero, with expiring breath,
Bequeathes fresh courage in the hour of death,
Bids his brave comrades hear the inspiring blast,
And nail their colors, dauntless, to the mast ;
Then dies, like Lawrence, trembling on his lip
That cry of *Honor*, " Don't give up the ship ! "

V E S P E R S.

Trinità de' Monti. Rome.

ARISE! the sun-clouds warn us it is time.
The door swings open, let us enter here :
Up the steep steps with noiseless foot we climb,
As if they led to some celestial sphere.

Listen! the nuns are gliding in unseen ;
And now begins the low, heart-melting strain.
Your tears are falling, — let them fall, — nor screen
From me your eyes ; — I know that sad, sweet pain.

Again, again that penitential wail !
Your clasped hands tremble ; — now the voices die.
Let us go hence ; — your quivering lips turn pale ; —
Hushed is the hymn so like an angel's sigh.

The day is fled ; — these walls are not our home ;
Forth in the breeze of evening let us stand.
Come ! lean on me as we descend to Rome,
From what has seemed the angels' spirit-land !



FAIR WIND.

O, who can tell, that never sailed
Along the glassy seas,
How fresh and welcome breaks the morn
That ushers in a breeze!
“ Fair wind ! Fair wind ! ” alow, aloft,
All hands delight to cry,

As, leaping through the parted waves,
The good ship makes reply.

While fore and aft, all stanch and tight,
She spreads her canvas wide,
The captain walks his realm, the deck,
With more than monarch's pride ; —
For well he knows the sea-bird's wings,
So swift and sure to-day,
Will waft him many a league to-night
In triumph on his way.

Then welcome to the rushing blast
That stirs the waters now ; —

Ye white-plumed heralds of the deep,

Make music round her prow !

Good sea-room in the roaring gale,

Let stormy trumpets blow ;

But chain ten thousand fathoms down

The sluggish calm below !

OUR FIRESIDE EVENING HYMN.

HITHER, bright angels, wing your flight,
And stay your gentle presence here ;
Watch round, and shield us through the night,
That every shade may disappear.

How sweet, when Nature claims repose,
And darkness floats in silence nigh,
To welcome in, at daylight's close,
Those radiant troops that gem the sky !

To feel that unseen hands we clasp,
While feet unheard are gathering round, —
To know that we in faith may grasp
Celestial guards from heavenly ground !

O, ever thus, with silent prayer
For those we love, may night begin, —
Reposing safe, released from care,
Till morning leads the sunlight in.

A SILENT SERMON.

ONCE as I wandered, just at close of day,
Through the mute aisles of Rome's cathedral gray,
No other footstep broke the stillness there,
Nor whispered vows, nor solemn-breathing prayer.
Alone, half trembling at the twilight gloom
Which shrouds the temple, as it shrouds the tomb.
I stood, unwarned, before an infant's bier, —
No mourners nigh, no mother's frantic tear.
A little child, unshrined by priest or hymn,
Lay in the proud cathedral vast and dim :

Its pallid hands, cross-folded on its breast,
Seemed like an infant's left in sleep to rest ;
Unwept, untended, there in death it lay,
A silent sermon wrapped in lifeless clay.
What living voice could speak with so much power,
As those dead lips in that still evening hour ?
Priests, censers, anthems, there no feeling shed,
When face to face the living meets the dead !

ON A BOOK OF SEA-MOSSES,

SENT TO AN EMINENT ENGLISH POET.

To him who sang of Venice, and revealed
How Wealth and Glory clustered in her streets,
And poised her marble domes with wondrous skill,
We send these tributes, plundered from the sea.
These many-colored, variegated forms
Sail to our rougher shores, and rise and fall
To the deep music of the Atlantic wave.
Such spoils we capture where the rainbows drop,
Melting in ocean. Here are broideries strange,

Wrought by the sea-nymphs from their golden hair,
And wove by moonlight. Gently turn the leaf.
From narrow cells, scooped in the rocks, we take
These fairy textures, lightly moored at morn.
Down sunny slopes, outstretching to the deep,
We roam at noon, and gather shapes like these.
Note now the painted webs from verdurous isles,
Festooned and spangled in sea-caves, and say
What hues of land can rival tints like those,
Torn from the scarfs and gonfalons of kings
Who dwell beneath the waters.

Such our Gift,
Culled from a margin of the Western World,
And offered unto Genius in the Old.

THE FLIGHT OF ANGELS.

Two Pilgrims to the Holy Land
Passed through our open door, —
Two sinless Angels, hand in hand,
Have reached the promised shore.

We saw them take their heavenward flight.
Through floods of drowning tears,
And felt in woe's bewildering night
The agony of years.

But now we watch the golden path
Their blessèd feet have trod,
And know that voice was not in wrath
Which called them both to God.

A LEGEND OF TYROL.

IN a green, sheltered nook, where a mountain
Stood guarding the peace-haunted ground,
Lived a maiden, whose smile was the sunlight
That gladdened the hill-sides around.

Her voice seemed a musical echo,
Whose notes wandered down from above ;
And wherever she walked in her beauty,
Sprang blossoms of joy and of love.

As she stood at her door in the morning,
The hunter below, riding by,
Cried out to his comrades, " We 're early !
For *look, there 's a star in the sky !*"

At the chapel, when good men were praying
That angels of God would appear,
Every heart turned to her, lowly kneeling,
And felt that an angel was near.

Thus radiant and pure in her presence,
A blessing she moved, day by day,
Till a proud lord beheld her and loved her,
And lured her for ever away.

He bore this bright bird of the mountain,
Watched over and shielded the best,
From the home of her youth and her kindred,
Away to his own haughty nest.

And lo ! the grim idols in waiting
Beset her for worship, and won ;
And the light of her beautiful childhood
Went down like the swift-fading sun.

And sudden as rises the black cloud,
When tempests the thunder-gods start,
Strange wishes encircled her bosom,
And Pride swept the halls of her heart.

And once, when o'ermastered by anger,
Her golden-haired boy sought her side ;
In her fury she smote down her first-born,
And he fell like a lily, and died.

There were tears, burning tears, to recall him,
And anguish that scorches the brain ;
But the harp-strings of life never answered
The touch that would tune them again !

* * * * *

She sleeps in a dark mausoleum,
And ages have rolled o'er her head,
But her name is remembered in Tyrol,
As when she was laid with the dead.

And to-day, as the traveller sits weary,
And drinks from the rude fountain-bowl,
They tell the sad story, and whisper
The warning that speaks to your soul.

TRUE HONOR.

THE painter's skill life's lineaments may trace,
And stamp the impress of a speaking face ;
The chisel's touch may make that marble warm
Which glows with all but breathing manhood's form ;
But deeper lines, beyond the sculptor's art,
Are those that write their impress on the heart.

On Talfourd's page what bright memorials glow
Of all that 's noblest, gentlest, best below !
Thou generous brother, guard of griefs concealed,
Matured by sorrow, deep but unrevealed,

Let me but claim, for all thy vigils here,
The noiseless tribute to a heart sincere.
Though Dryburgh's walls still hold their sacred dust,
And Stratford's chancel shrines its hallowed trust,
To Elia's grave the pilgrim shall repair,
And hang with love perennial garlands there.

And thou, great Bard of never-dying name,
Thy filial care outshines the poet's fame ;
For who, that wanders by the dust of Gray,
While memory tolls the knell of parting day,
But lingers fondly at the hallowed tomb,
That shrouds a parent in its pensive gloom,
To bless the son who poured that gushing tear,
So warm and earnest, at a mother's bier !

Wreaths for that line which Woman's tribute gave,
“ Last at the cross, and earliest at the grave.”

Can I forget, a pilgrim o'er the sea,
The countless shrines of Woman's charity ?
In thy gay capital, bewildering France,
Where Pleasure's shuttle weaves the whirling dance,
Beneath the shelter of St. Mary's dome,
Where pallid suffering seeks and finds a home,
Methinks I see that sainted sister now
Wipe Death's cold dew-drops from an infant's brow ;
Can I forget that mild, seraphic grace
With heaven-eyed Patience meeting in her face ?
Ah, sure, if angels leave celestial spheres,
We saw an angel dry a mortal's tears.



THE DEAD.

“ Still the same, no charm forgot, —
Nothing lost that Time had given.”

FORGET not the Dead, who have loved, who have left us,
Who bend o’er us now, from their bright homes above ;
But believe — never doubt — that the God who bereft us
Permits them to mingle with friends they still love.

Repeat their fond words, all their noble deeds cherish,
Speak pleasantly of them who left us in tears ; —
Other joys may be lost, but their names should not perish
While time bears our feet through the valley of years.

Dear friends of our youth ! can we cease to remember
The last look of life, and the low-whispered prayer ?
O, cold be our hearts as the ice of December
When Love's tablets record no remembrances there.

Then forget not the Dead, who are evermore nigh us,
Still floating sometimes to our dream-haunted bed ; —
In the loneliest hour, in the crowd, they are by us ;
Forget not the Dead ! O, forget not the Dead !

BALLAD OF THE TEMPEST.

WE were crowded in the cabin,
Not a soul would dare to sleep, —
It was midnight on the waters,
And a storm was on the deep.

'T is a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered in the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, " Cut away the mast ! "

So we shuddered there in silence, —
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring,
And the breakers talked with Death.

As thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy in his prayers, —
“ We are lost ! ” the captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.

But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
“ Is n't God upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land ? ”

Then we kissed the little maiden,
And we spoke in better cheer,
And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.

SACO FALLS.

RUSH on, bold stream ! thou sendest up
Brave notes to all the woods around,
When morning beams are gathering fast,
And hushed is every human sound ;
I stand beneath the sombre hill,
The stars are dim o'er fount and rill,
And still I hear thy waters play,
In welcome music, far away.
Dash on, bold stream ! I love the roar
Thou sendest up from rock and shore.

'T is night in heaven, — the rustling leaves
Are whispering of the coming storm,
And thundering down the river's bed
I see thy lengthened, darkling form ;
No voices from the vales are heard,
The winds are low, — each little bird
Hath sought its quiet, rocking nest,
Folded its wing, and gone to rest, —
And still I hear thy waters play,
In welcome music, far away.

The earth hath many a gallant show
Of towering peak and glacier bright,
But ne'er beneath the glorious moon
Hath Nature framed a lovelier sight

Than thy fair tide, with diamonds fraught,
When every drop with light is caught,
And o'er the bridge the village girls
Reflect below their waving curls,
While merrily thy waters play,
In welcome music, far away !

THE FOUNTAIN, — BOSTON COMMON.

Yon fountain Nymph, now sparkling through the trees,
In humble Natick wooed the mountain breeze.
There, 'mid the torrent, nursed in thunders loud
From the dark bosom of the stormy cloud,
Or gentlier fed, when Summer's showery train
In drops of music poured the welcome rain,
Her lot was cast, content to glide along,
Lulled by the ripple of her own sweet song.
The Indian maids, her playmates, passed away,
And still she waited for a brighter day,

Till, all matured, she rose at Duty's call,
And stepped a Naiad in her charmèd hall, —
Sprang, crowned with grace, the monarch Elm beside,
And stood in radiant light, his young enchanted bride.

SLEIGHING SONG.

O, SWIFT we go, o'er the fleecy snow,
When moonbeams sparkle round ;
When hoofs keep time to music's chime,
As merrily on we bound.

On a winter's night, when hearts are light,
And health is on the wind,
We loose the rein and sweep the plain,
And leave our cares behind.

With a laugh and song, we glide along,
Across the fleeting snow ;
With friends beside, how swift we ride
On the beautiful track below !

O, the raging sea has joy for me,
When gale and tempests roar ;
But give me the speed of a foaming steed,
And I 'll ask for the waves no more.



OUR SHIPS.

OUR stately ships ! in fleet career,
They linger not behind,
Where gallant sails from other lands
Court favoring tide and wind.
With banners on the breeze, they leap
As gayly o'er the foam,

As lofty barks from prouder seas
That long have learned to roam.

The Indian wave, with luring smiles,
Swept round them bright to-day ;
And havens to Atlantic isles
Are opening on their way ;
Ere yet these evening shadows close,
Or this frail song is o'er,
Full many a straining mast will rise
To greet a foreign shore.

High up the lashing Northern deep,
Where glimmering watch-lights beam, —

Away in beauty where the stars
In tropic brightness gleam, —
Where'er the sea-bird wets her beak,
Or blows the stormy gale, —
On to the water's farthest verge
Our ships majestic sail.

They dip their keels in every stream
That swells beneath the sky ;
And where the thundering billows roll,
Their starry pennants fly :
They furl their sails in threatening clouds
That float across the main, —
To link with love earth's distant bays
In many a golden chain.

They deck our halls with sparkling gems
That shone on Orient strands,
And garlands round the hills they bind,
From far-off sunny lands ;
But we will ask no gaudy wreath
From foreign clime or realm,
While safely glides our ship of state,
With Genius at the helm.

ON A PAIR OF ANTLERS,

BROUGHT FROM GERMANY.

GIFT, from the land of song and wine, —

Can I forget the enchanted day,

When first along the glorious Rhine

I heard the huntsman's bugle play,

And marked the early star that dwells

Among the cliffs of Drachenfels !

Again the isles of beauty rise ; —

Again the crumbling tower appears,

That stands, defying stormy skies,
 With memories of a thousand years,
And dark old forests wave again,
And shadows crowd the dusky plain.

They brought the gift that I might hear
 The music of the roaring pine, —
To fill again my charmèd ear
 With echoes of the Rodenstein, —
With echoes of the silver horn, —
Across the wailing waters borne.

Trophies of spoil ! henceforth your place
 Is in this quiet home of mine ; —

Farewell the busy, bloody chase,

Mute emblems now of "auld lang syne,"

When Youth and Hope went hand in hand

To roam the dear old German land.

SUMMER EVENING MELODY.

Go forth! the sky is blue above,
And cool the green sod lies below ;
It is the hour that claims for love
The halcyon moments as they flow.

The glowworm lends her twinkling lamp,
The cricket sings his soothing strain,
And fainter sounds the weary tramp
Of footsteps in the grassy lane.

Go forth, ye pallid sons of care !
Too long your thoughts to earth are given ;
To-night sweet music haunts the air,
And fragrant odors breathe of heaven !

VILLAGER'S WINTER-EVENING SONG.

Nor a leaf on the tree, not a bud in the hollow,
Where late swung the bluebell, and blossomed the rose ;
And hushed is the cry of the swift-darting swallow,
That circled the lake in the twilight's dim close.

Gone, gone are the woodbine and sweet-scented brier,
That bloomed o'er the hillock and gladdened the vale,
And the vine, that uplifted its green-pointed spire,
Hangs drooping and sear on the frost-covered pale.

And hark to the gush of the deep-welling fountain,
That prattled and shone in the light of the moon ;
Soon, soon shall its rushing be still on the mountain,
And locked up in silence its frolicsome tune.

Then heap up the hearth-stone with dry forest-branches,
And gather about me, my children, in glee ;
For cold on the upland the stormy wind launches,
And dear is the home of my loved ones to me.

CHILDREN IN EXILE.

Two Indian boys were carried to London not long ago for exhibition, and both died soon after their arrival. It is related that one of them, during his last moments, talked incessantly of the scenes and sports of his distant home, and that both wished earnestly to be taken back to their native woods.

FAR in the dark old forest glades,
Where kalmias bloom around,
They had their place of youthful sport,
Their childhood's hunting-ground ;
And swinging lightly in the vines
That o'er the wigwam hung,
The golden robins, building near,
Above their dwelling sung.

Each morn their little dusky feet
 Sprang down the sparkling lea,
To plunge beneath the glowing stream
 Beside the chestnut-tree ;
And when the hiding squirrel's nest
 They sought, far up the hills,
They bathed their reeking foreheads cool
 Among the mountain rills.

They saw the early silver moon
 Peep through her wavy bower,
And in her beams they chased the bat
 Around his leafy tower ;
And, when the stars all silently
 Went out o'er hill and plain,

They listened low to merry chimes
Of summer-evening rain.

These haunts they missed, — the city air
No healthful music brings, —
They longed to run through woodland dells,
Where Nature ever sings;
And, drooping, 'mid the noise and glare,
They pined for brook and glen,
And, dying, still looked fondly back,
And asked for Home again.

BROKEN VOWS.

SUGGESTED BY THE PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG FLORENTINE GIRL AT VIENNA.

SHE has learned a sad lesson, — she trusted away
A heart that loved wildly, but O how sincere !
She dreamed that such happiness could not decay,
But the full-flowing fountain has shrunk to a tear.

She thought that the sun, which at morn shone so bright,
Would surely shine on till the starlight appeared ;
But sorrow came down on the cold wings of night,
And all her youth cherished was trampled and seared.

The being she worshipped, as angels adore, —
The bird she had nestled so close to her heart, —
That one ! — O, no other can ever restore
The joy of her Eden, — from him she must part !

She must strive to forget him ; and never again
Send a dove to the world with the hope of return ; —
She must close every portal, but sighing and pain,
In a bosom that sorrow can never unlearn !

COMMON SENSE.

SHE came among the gathering crowd,
A maiden fair, without pretence,
And when they asked her humble name,
She whispered mildly, "Common Sense."

Her modest garb drew every eye,
Her ample cloak, her shoes of leather ;
And when they sneered, she simply said,
"I dress according to the weather."

They argued long, and reasoned loud,
In dubious Hindoo phrase mysterious,
While she, poor child, could not divine
Why girls so young should be so serious.

They knew the length of Plato's beard.
And how the scholars wrote in Saturn ;
She studied authors not so deep,
And took the Bible for her pattern.

And so she said, " Excuse me, friends,
I find all have their proper places,
And *Common Sense* should stay at home
With cheerful hearts and smiling faces."

WEBSTER. — 1851.

LET blooming boys, from stagnant cloisters freed,
Sneer at old virtues, and the Patriot's creed,
Forget the lessons taught at Valor's side,
And all their country's honest fame deride.
All are not such ; some glowing blood remains
To warm the icy current of our veins, —
Some from the watch-towers still descry afar
The faintest glimmer of an adverse star.

When faction storms, when meaner statesmen quail,
Full high advanced, our eagle meets the gale !

On some great point where Honor takes her stand, —
The Ehrenbreitstein of our native land, —
See, in the front, to strike for Freedom's cause,
The mailed Defender of her rights and laws !
On his great arm behold a nation lean,
And parcel empire with the Island Queen ;
Great in the council, peerless in debate, —
Who follows Webster takes the field too late.

TO A FRIEND.

Go, with a manly heart,
Where courage leads the brave ; —
High thoughts, not years, have stamped their part,
Who shunned the coward's grave.

Clear, to the eye of youth,
Their record stands enrolled,
Who held aloft the flag of Truth,
Nor slept beneath its fold.

They heard the trumpet sound
Where hosts to battle trod,
And marched along that burning ground ;
Fear not ! they rest with God.

Like them, advance in love,
And upward bend thy sight ;
Win Faith through Prayer ; He rules above
Who still protects the right.

DIRGE FOR A YOUNG GIRL.

UNDERNEATH the sod, low lying,

Dark and drear,

Sleepeth one who left, in dying,

Sorrow here.

Yes, they 're ever bending o'er her,

Eyes that weep ;

Forms, that to the cold grave bore her,

Vigils keep.

When the summer moon is shining

Soft and fair,

Friends she loved in tears are twining

Chaplets there.

Rest in peace, thou gentle spirit,

Throned above ;

Souls like thine with God inherit

Life and love !

EVENTIDE IN THE COUNTRY.

THIS cottage door, this gentle gale,
Hay-scented, whispering round,
Yon path-side rose, that down the vale
Breathes incense from the ground,
Methinks should from the dullest clod
Invite a thankful heart to God.

But, Lord, the violet, bending low,
Seems better moved to praise ;

From us, what scanty blessings flow,

How voiceless close our days ! —

Father, forgive us, and the flowers

Shall lead in prayer the vesper hours.

A BRIDAL MELODY.

SHE stood, like an angel just wandered from heaven,
A pilgrim benighted away from the skies,
And little we deemed that to mortals were given
Such visions of beauty as came from her eyes.

She looked up and smiled on the many glad faces,
'The friends of her childhood, who stood by her side ;
But she shone o'er them all, like a queen of the Graces,
When, blushing, she whispered the vow of a bride.

We sang an old song, as with garlands we crowned her,
And each left a kiss on her delicate brow ;
And we prayed that a blessing might ever surround her,
And the future of life be unclouded as now.



A VALENTINE.

SHE that is fair, though never vain or proud,
More fond of home than fashion's changing crowd ;
Whose taste refined even female friends admire,
Dressed not for show, but robed in neat attire ;

She who has learned, with mild, forgiving breast,
To pardon frailties, hidden or confest ;
True to herself, yet willing to submit,
More swayed by love than ruled by worldly wit ;
Though young, discreet, — though ready, ne'er unkind,
Blessed with no pedant's, but a *Woman's* mind ; —
She wins our hearts, towards *her* our thoughts incline,
So at her door go leave my Valentine.

BURIAL OF A GERMAN EMIGRANT'S CHILD
AT SEA.

No flowers to lay upon his little breast,
No passing-bell to call his spirit home,
But gliding gently to his place of rest,
Parting, 'mid tears, at eve, the ocean foam.

No turf was round him, — but the lifting surge
Entombed those lids that closed so calm and slow,
While solemn winds, like a cathedral dirge,
Sighed o'er his form a requiem sad and low.

Ah, who shall tell the maddening grief of love,
That swept her heart-strings in that hour of woe ! —
Weep, childless mother, but O look above
For aid that only Heaven can now bestow.

Gaze, blue-eyed mourner, on that silken hair ; —
Weep, but remember that thy God will stand
Beside thee here, in all this wild despair,
As on the green mounds of thy Fatherland.

SONG

OVER THE CRADLE OF TWO INFANT SISTERS, SLEEPING.

SWEET be their rest ! no ghastly things,
To scare their dreams, assemble here ;
But safe beneath good angels' wings
May each repose from year to year.

Cheerful, like some long summer-day,
May all their waking moments flow,
Happier, as run life's sands away,
Unstained by sin, untouched by woe.

As now they sleep, serene and pure,
Their little arms entwined in love,
So may they live, obey, endure,
And shine with yon bright host above.

M. W. B.

THEY tell me thou art laid to rest,
Companion of my happiest years !
That thou hast joined the loved and blest,
Whose early graves are wet with tears ;
That I shall never hear again
The voice that charmed my boyhood's ear,
Nor meet among the haunts of men
Thy honest grasp of love sincere.

Friend of my youth ! my buried friend !

Thy step was gayest in the ring ; —

My thoughts far back through childhood wend,

And can I now thy requiem sing ?

Alas ! I feel 't is all in vain, —

Before such grief my spirits bow ; —

Farewell ! I cannot trace the pain

That weighs upon my heart-strings now.

ON A VILLAGE CHURCH IN ENGLAND

THE air is sweet with violets, and the West

Robes in its evening splendor earth and sky.

Whoe'er thou art, here find repose. This spot,

In rustic beauty clad, woos thee to rest.

The tongue of Time calls from the gray old tower,

And every leaf is whispering *Calm* and *Peace*.

Dear, welcome shrine ! haunt of the good, farewell !

Oft in my distant home, at twilight hour,

Alone and still, shall I recall this scene ; —

The ivied porch, the steeple touched with light,

The hedgerows green, oaks that the centuries crown,
The kindly voices Friendship newly gave,
The chime of waters musical and low,
And songs of birds careering up to heaven.

TO ONE BENEATH THE WAVES.

COME back from Memory's mourning urn,

And bless my sight again ;

For now in restless dreams I turn

To clasp thy hand, — in vain !

I bid thy gentle spirit come

And look once more on me ;

But thou art slumbering where the foam

Rolls madly o'er the sea.

Alas ! how soon our better years

To tempest-winds are blown,

And all our hopes, and joys, and fears

Alike are widely strown !

She rests in yonder village mound,

Who should have been thy bride,

And thou art sleeping 'neath the sound

Of ocean's flowing tide.

TO A PAINTER.

I 'VE sailed an ocean to behold the Rhine,
That world of beauty bursting on the view ;
But now *your canvas wafts to me* the vine
And rock-clad hills long since I wandered through.

Twin-castled River, far away no more, —
What further need the Atlantic wave to plough ?
You 've brought old Coblentz to my very door,
And Ehrenbreitstein is my neighbor now !

ELOQUENCE.

IMMORTAL art ! where'er thy votaries dwell,
Wit plumes his wings, and Wisdom builds her cell ;
Honor, triumphant, spreads his portals wide,
And bids thee enter, welcome to his side ;
Truth comes, obedient to thy silvery tone,
And Virtue's voice commingles with thine own.
Lo ! at thy call, the radiant sisters meet,
And all the Graces circle at thy feet :
Ten thousand forms around thy pathway shine,
But all their magic light, immortal art, is thine.

A CHARACTER.

O, HAPPIEST he, whose riper years retain
The hopes of youth, unsullied by a stain !
His eve of life in calm content shall glide,
Like the still streamlet to the ocean tide :
No gloomy cloud hangs o'er his tranquil day ;
No meteor lures him from his home astray ;
For him there glows with glittering beam on high
Love's changeless star that leads him to the sky ;
Still to the past he sometimes turns to trace
The mild expression of a mother's face,
And dreams, perchance, as oft in earlier years,
The low, sweet music of her voice he hears.

IN THE FOREST.

THROUGH the proud aisles of old cathedral woods
What echoing voices break the solitudes !
At matin-hour go hear, on green hill-side,
Bells of bird-music ringing far and wide,
While mountain streams that burst their prison crags
Run down the rocks and wave their snow-white flags.

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SCENE FROM BOYHOOD.

Look through the casement of yon village school,
Where now the pedant with his oaken rule
Sits like Augustus on the imperial throne,
Between two poets yet to fame unknown :

While restless Horace pinions martyred flies,
Some younger Virgil fills the room with sighs ;
Who, suffering now for one untimely laugh,
Erelong will write his master's epitaph ;
Forgetting in his lines and comments bland
The painful ridges on his blistered hand.

IN VENICE.

O'ER the waves gliding sings our gondolier, —
Moonrise, high midnight, and the voice of song !
Never again, never again, O Queen
Of waters, may my feet the wide sea cross
That laves thy marble shores. . . . Take my farewell.
To-morrow's sun must light the pilgrim onward,
For his home is in the West, that far-off land
Thy youth had never known.

What sings he now
Who guides this phantom bark to meet the moon !

'T is a brave chant of Bucentaur and Love,
Older than Tasso, or the Genoese
Who left his birthplace for the new-found isles.
The maids of Venice sang it to their lutes,
When Doges listened in Ausonia's prime !

* * * * *

Turn the prow homeward, for the day-light hour
Stands waiting in the East. The night is ended,
And I must be gone.

H O M E.

THERE are, thank Heaven, beneath this fitful dome,
Some leaflets floating near affection's home ;
Some cloudless skies that smile on scenes below,
Some changeless hues in life's wide-spanning bow.

So let us live, that if misfortune's blast
Come like a whirlwind to our hearths at last,
Sunbeams may break from one small spot of blue,
To guide us safe life's dreary desert through.

CONTRAST.

THE crow's harsh note loud through a century rings,
The nightingale is mute ere twenty Springs !
When Bacon speaks, such golden thoughts attend,
The fear of all men is that he will end ; —
When Borus rises, every drowsy son
Thinks of his watch, and prays the oration done.

TO A MALIGNANT CRITIC.

RAIL at him, brave spirit ! surround him with foes !
The wolf 's at his door, and there 's none to defend ;
He is " poor as a crow " ; give him lustier blows,
And don't be alarmed, for he has n't a friend.

Now twirl your red steel in the wound you have made, —
His wife lies a-dying, his children are dead ;
He 'll soon be alone, man, so don't be afraid,
But give him a thrust that will keep down his head.

He has n't a sixpence to buy his wife's shroud,
He " writes for a living," so stab him again !
Raise a laugh, as he timidly shrinks from the crowd,
And hunt him like bloodhound, most valiant of men !

Ha ! finished at last ; — there he hangs ; cut him down ;
" A fine manly forehead ! " I hear you exclaim ; —
Now choose your next victim, to tickle the town,
And your heart-pointed pen shall reap plenty of fame !

LIFE AT NIAGARA.

AN EPISTLE FROM THE FALLS.

DEAR N. : While the rainbows are spanning the Falls,
And a lusty Scotch infant next door raises squalls, —
While the frantic young mother shouts madly for milk,
In tones not so soft, quite, as satin or silk, —
Your friend, grown poetic, has snatched up his pen,
To dash off a line to “ the best of young men.”

You 've been at the Falls, and they can't be described,
Though Coleridge himself from the tomb should be bribed ;
Pile mountains of paper, and flood them with ink,
And Niagara is dry, though the reader should sink.

But there 's *life* here, my friend, — closely packed to be sure, —
 For fashion condenses what man must endure :
 Not a bed to be had, not a chair, or a block,
 And the only spare table is old Table Rock.
 How glorious a visit, were taverns and gongs
 But banished a week to where Fashion belongs,
 To tramp through the forest with no charge of fares,
 In a pair of brogans, such as Audubon wears ;
 To meet a lithe Indian, all stately and stark,
 And “ put up ” a few days in his wigwam of bark ; —
 Gods ! a walk through the woods by the light of the stars,
 Would outweigh all the lamps, and the Lewiston cars !

But here 's *life* at the Falls — from a year to fourscore —
 (And I think by the sound there 's a *day* at next door) ;
 Here are members of Congress, away from their seats,
 Though sure to be there when the dinner-gong beats ;

Here are waiters, so eager your viands to snatch,
That they leap down the stairs like a multiplied Patch ;
To the sound of sweet music they nimbly appear,
And whisk off your corn while they tickle your ear.
Here are pensive young preachers, dressed quite *comme il faut*,
In coats black as night, and cravats pure as snow ;
Rich East India governors, heavy as gold,
Hanging round like weak sun-flowers, yellow and old ;
Artistical talent, with sketch-book displayed,
Drawing very bad water in very poor shade ;
Fat Cockneys from Charing Cross ; belles from Madrid,
Whose long jewelled fingers outrival Jamschid ;
Superb English maidens, with swan-swimming gait,
Who float round the Rapids like Junos in state ; —
But the brightest-eyed daughters, the best string of pearls,
Represent in their beauty our own Yankee Girls.

Here cluster the fair, and the plain, and the prim,
 Round the gallant and gay, whiskered up to the brim ;
 Here 's a biped in boots, a most exquisite ass,
 Who looks at the Falls through a golden-rimmed glass ;
 And to-day such a waist, N., I saw on the Rock,
 That to furnish the brains seemed a slight waste of stock.
 Here 's a lively old lady, all feathers and fans,
 Who trots about peddling her Susans and Anns ;
 And a drab-colored Quaker, I 've seen more than twice
 Take a sly glass of something in water and ice.

But brief let me be, while the dull curfew tolls ;
Niagara still lives! still it rushes, and rolls ; —
 There is no spot on earth where I 'd sooner meet you,
 And the friends we both love, N., the choice and the true,
 Though a Down-Eastern editor published the lie,
 That this glorious old cataract 's “ all in my eye ” !

THE ALARMÈD SKIPPER.

“It was an Ancient Mariner.”

MANY a long, long year ago,
Nantucket skippers had a plan
Of finding out, though “lying low,”
How near New York their schooners ran.

They greased the lead before it fell,
And then, by sounding through the night, —
Knowing the soil that stuck, so well,
They always guessed their reckoning right.

A skipper gray, whose eyes were dim,
Could tell, by *tasting*, just the spot,
And so below he 'd "dowse the glim" —
After, of course, his "something hot."

Snug in his berth, at eight o'clock,
This ancient skipper might be found ;
No matter how his craft would rock,
He slept, — for skippers' naps are sound !

The watch on deck would now and then
Run down and wake him, with the lead ; —
He 'd up, and taste, and tell the men
How many miles they went ahead.

One night, 't was Jotham Marden's watch,
A curious wag, — the peddler's son, —
And so he mused, (the wanton wretch,)
“ To-night I 'll have a grain of fun.

“ We 're all a set of stupid fools
'To think the skipper knows by *tasting*
What ground he 's on ; — Nantucket schools
Don't teach such stuff, with all their basting ! ”

And so he took the well-greased lead
And rubbed it o'er a box of earth
That stood on deck, — a parsnip-bed, —
And then he sought the skipper's berth.

“ Where are we now, Sir? Please to taste.”

The skipper yawned, put out his tongue,

Then oped his eyes in wondrous haste,

And then upon the floor he sprung !

The skipper stormed, and tore his hair,

Thrust on his boots, and roared to Marden,

“ *Nantucket ’s sunk, and here we are*

Right over old Marm Hackett’s garden !”





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